Master's Degree Final Project

Beyond the Game: volunteers as the backbone of FIBA European Championships

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Annexes

Annex II. Interview with Professor Carlos Resende

INTERVIEWER – Hello, Professor. First of all, thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me. To begin, could you share a bit about your professional and academic journey? It'll help provide context when I include this in my thesis.

CARLOS RESENDE – Of course. I'll keep it succinct. I've always had a passion for sports. I started playing handball as a federated athlete when I was eight years old. Later, I also ran races and played a bit of football, but handball was the sport that truly stuck with me. I trained for eight years. At 17, I signed professionally with FC Porto and moved there from Lisbon, where I was born. I spent my entire professional playing career at just two clubs, and from my first season, I was already part of the national team. After retiring as a player, I began coaching at Porto. Initially, I considered becoming an engineer, largely influenced by my parents, who believed engineering was a prestigious path. But I didn't even know what being an engineer truly meant—I just wanted to follow their advice. Eventually, I realized I wanted to build on my athletic experience, both as a player and a coach, and pursue something related to sports. I've always been interested in management, so I enrolled in the Sports Management program at ISMAI. Later, I started a master's in Sports Management at FADEUP, completing the first year, and then enrolled in a doctoral program, which I'm still pursuing today.

INTERVIEWER – That's the one you're currently enrolled in, right?

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, exactly. Since graduating, I've worked as both a coach and a university professor. I was the top student in both my undergraduate and master's programs, which led to invitations to teach. My teaching focuses on two areas: handball, due to my sporting background, and sports management, which aligns with my academic training.

INTERVIEWER – Impressive. You've built quite a legacy. Now, thinking back to your time as a player—European Championships, national team tournaments—did you notice the presence of volunteers? Were there moments when they made a real difference, like helping with equipment or managing logistics?

CARLOS RESENDE – Absolutely. One of my most memorable experiences was at the 1994 European Championship, where I met a volunteer who was serving as the event mascot. We connected during the tournament and have remained friends ever since.

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That volunteer is now a well-known journalist at RTP and also does commentary for sports. Back then, he was Portugal's mascot—Triton, if I recall correctly. In general, I have a very positive view of volunteers. Many of them recognize the value of being involved—whether it's the joy of being close to the sport they love, interacting with coaches and athletes, or gaining experience in the field. It's a unique opportunity, and I've seen many take it seriously and grow from it.

INTERVIEWER – That's wonderful. And during your playing career, did coaches ever encourage players to engage with volunteers or support events in that way? Or is that something that's become more common in recent years?

CARLOS RESENDE – Back then, it wasn't as structured or emphasized as it is today. The idea of volunteering at events or wearing team gear as part of the support staff wasn't widespread. It's something that's developed more in recent years, with greater recognition of the role volunteers play in the success of sporting events.

INTERVIEWER – Let's talk about volunteering in sports. From your experience, do you feel it's something that's always been present, both in large and small events?

CARLOS RESENDE – Absolutely. Volunteering has always been a part of sports. Whether at major international events or smaller local tournaments, volunteers are essential. In Europe—and especially in Portugal—sports rely heavily on volunteer work.

INTERVIEWER – Really? Even at the organizational level?

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes. For example, I work with Póvoa club and the president is a volunteer. In fact, I'd say over 90% of club leadership roles are filled by volunteers. So when we talk about volunteering in sports, we're not just referring to event staff—we're talking about managers, support staff, and long-term contributors. They've always been there, even if the topic is getting more academic attention now.

INTERVIEWER – That's exactly the focus of my thesis—how to motivate volunteers. I've noticed that responsibilities vary by role, but the age range is fairly consistent. For example, field volunteers are often youth athletes, like basketball players. Coaches usually recruit them a week before the event to help with tasks like mopping the floor or tracking stats. They're usually between 15 and 18 years old. Those who stay with teams tend to be older and take on more responsibility.

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, that's true. And if you look closely, many field managers or team guides are actually parents of athletes.

INTERVIEWER – That's something I've noticed too.

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CARLOS RESENDE – It's a cultural thing. I remember an experience in Germany years ago. We were at an international match and saw older gentlemen managing field logistics. They were all volunteers—former players. They stayed involved with their clubs out of pure passion, helping in any way they could.

INTERVIEWER – That's fascinating. Regarding recruitment, do you think there's a formal process, or is it mostly informal—through word of mouth, former players, coaches?

CARLOS RESENDE – It depends on the level. For events like the Olympics, World Cup or European Championships, recruitment is completely formal. But for smaller club tournaments, it's much more informal. The smaller the event, the more casual the recruitment tends to be.

INTERVIEWER – That makes sense. What I've seen here in Europe is that the Porto Basketball Association is one of the strongest nationally. When European Championships are held, most volunteers come from nearby clubs. The logistics team is usually from Lisbon, since the federation is based there, but the Attachés—the team guides—are always local. I've spoken with federation staff, team managers from Croatia and Ireland, and seen how it all works.

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, and in international tournaments, we always had someone assigned to us. I remember a tournament in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where we were guided by a man who had lost a leg. He was incredibly joyful and inspiring. He used to be a player and was invited to play professionally in Zagreb. But on a weekend visit home, he stepped on a mine and lost his leg—and his sports career. Despite that, he remained cheerful and dedicated. His presence made a lasting impression on all of us.

INTERVIEWER – Injuries are common, especially among young athletes. I've seen girls go from U-16 to U-18 and then suffer tendonitis or ligament tears that end their seasons, sometimes even their careers. Training young athletes is tough. That's why I wanted to ask: in your experience, do organizational guides or volunteers stay with the teams at their hotels, or is it more of a logistical role?

CARLOS RESENDE – From what I've seen, it's mostly logistical. I don't recall volunteers staying in hotels with teams. The focus tends to be on recruiting local volunteers who remain in the area, rather than having a rotating group.

INTERVIEWER – That's interesting. In basketball, we actually stayed at the hotel with the teams. I had the Croatian team two years in a row, and we were available to them 24/7. One of the players joked, "Can you get me a glass of water?" I said, "Sure, but do

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not try to take advantage of me." She told me that in other countries, no one stays with them. That really stuck with me.

CARLOS RESENDE – That's not common in my experience. Volunteers usually accompany teams to training and games and sometimes join for breakfast, but staying at the hotel is rare. It doesn't mean it never happens, but I haven't seen it.

INTERVIEWER – For us, it was a huge motivator. Even though the hotel was near my house, being there with the team—playing cards at night, hanging out in the lobby—created a strong bond. At the end of the tournament, they gave us shirts, gifts. One year, the Irish team even signed a card and took us to dinner. That kind of interaction really motivates young volunteers.

CARLOS RESENDE – That's definitely a powerful motivator.

INTERVIEWER – We even have a volunteer manager who's on payroll and available to support us at any time. Do you think young volunteers feel supported by the organization, or do they sometimes feel left on their own?

CARLOS RESENDE – In the events I've participated in, I felt they were well organized. I never had to deal with anything too serious. Occasionally, someone might miss a bus, but we always had contact info and support. In most cases, the Attachés wasn't even necessary because communication was so smooth.

INTERVIEWER – That's good to hear. My sister and I have volunteered at several championships. At the congress center—where the basketball games are held—we became some of the oldest volunteers after Covid. That gave us more responsibility and trust. I remember one game where a player tried to dunk at halftime and broke the backboard. It made a hole in the floor. Total chaos. But the situation was resolved in half an hour.

CARLOS RESENDE – That's impressive.

INTERVIEWER – The Irish team was great—they were calm and supportive. But the opposing team was more hostile. I felt like volunteers are the first line of contact, and when things go wrong, we're the ones facing the tension. At the congress center, I noticed we only had one stretcher in the physiotherapy room. When two players needed treatment, it caused delays. These small logistical gaps can really affect the experience.

CARLOS RESENDE – That sounds like a lack of resources. And yes, volunteers are often the first people teams interact with, so they bear the brunt of those moments.

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INTERVIEWER – We also had cultural challenges. Teams from Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo had different customs. At the hotel buffet, they ate with their hands, and even threw toilet paper into the hallway. It wasn't disrespect—it was just a cultural difference.

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, that's culture. It's important to understand and respect those differences.

INTERVIEWER – Professor, in some tournaments I've worked at, we've had hotels drop out from one year to the next because teams didn't behave well and disturbed other guests. It becomes a logistical challenge. In your experience with sports management, have you come across people involved in organizing federation tournaments who've dealt with this kind of issue?

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, especially in European and World Championships—at least in handball—one of the key concerns is cultural sensitivity. For example, if you prepare food for a Muslim team without considering dietary restrictions, it can become a serious issue. Ideally, you create isolated dining areas with appropriate meals and accommodations that don't disturb other guests. During Ramadan, for instance, they can't eat during daylight hours, so we need to plan accordingly. These cultural differences require careful attention.

INTERVIEWER – I've seen that too. Last year, I stayed at a hotel in Vila do Conde that had a lot of issues. It was tucked away near a factory, and buses couldn't turn around if a car was parked on the street. That caused delays, which then affected meal times and game schedules. If a team plays at 9 p.m., they want to eat at a specific time. We had to coordinate all of that with the hotel. It was stressful for everyone. In a situation like a late bus or a meal issue, would you go to the Attachés first, or directly to the hotel or transport manager?

CARLOS RESENDE – If the Attaché was nearby, I'd probably speak to them first. But if I had a good relationship with the hotel or felt I had the autonomy, I might handle it directly or in parallel with the Attaché. It really depends on the relationships and the structure of the event. In some cases, the Attaché is the first point of contact and handles everything.

INTERVIEWER – And when the Attaché is present, do you feel that teams and coaches respect their authority? Like, if they say, "We need to leave now," does everyone follow that, or do they sometimes bend the rules?

CARLOS RESENDE – Usually, the Attaché communicates with the team manager. The

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players and staff follow the manager's instructions, not directly the Attaché's. Of course, there are occasional mishaps—someone oversleeps or gets sick. I remember a funny story from the Handball World Cup in Portugal. A Croatian player forgot his sneakers at the hotel. The Attaché asked for the room key, went back to get them, and the player ended up having a great game. After that, the player insisted on sitting in the same seat on the bus and never brought his sneakers down again—Croatians are very superstitious.

INTERVIEWER – I've worked with Croatia too—they're definitely like that. In my case, I once forgot something in the room and it ended up on the plane. My sister was with the Estonian team, and before the tournament started, we had a meeting with FIBA to confirm uniforms and colors. But their plane lost all their equipment. Thankfully, they recovered it just an hour before the first game. It was chaos.

CARLOS RESENDE – Some things are just out of our control.

INTERVIEWER – Exactly. And with Croatia, I've seen how ritualistic they are—entering with the right foot, being at the door three times, doing things in specific numbers. I've been with some of these girls since U-16, and now they're U-20. It's been amazing to watch them grow. As a player and manager, did you feel that volunteers or staff were respected by the teams?

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, when we felt that the person was genuinely there to help us, we respected them. That makes all the difference.

INTERVIEWER – I've had both experiences—some people were difficult, but others were truly five-star. Professor, as with everything in life, we meet all kinds of people—some friendly, some not so much. I imagine that applies to volunteers too?

CARLOS RESENDE – Exactly, Inês. You'll always encounter different personalities. Some volunteers are naturally warm and helpful, others less so. That's just human nature. But when it comes to athletes, they're expected to follow their manager's instructions. If they don't comply, it's not because of the Attaché—it's because they're not following the rules of the institution that brought them there. They signed up for something, and that comes with responsibilities.

INTERVIEWER – Absolutely. Now, looking ahead, do you think the number of sports volunteers will increase, especially with Matosinhos being the European City of Sport this year? There are so many activities and training sessions. And do you think volunteers might receive benefits in the future—like subsidies or perks?

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CARLOS RESENDE – If you introduce subsidies, the concept of volunteering changes. Volunteering is about choosing to contribute without expecting financial compensation. Volunteers gain something—whether it's the excitement of being close to the action, personal growth, or training. That's the reward. What organizations should do is study what motivates volunteers and tailor their events to meet those expectations. I don't think the number of volunteers will increase naturally. In fact, it might decline, especially in sports with less visibility than football. It's up to organizations to prevent that by understanding and supporting their volunteers.

INTERVIEWER – That's exactly the goal of my research—to figure out how to attract more young people to volunteer, especially in sports like basketball, handball, and volleyball. These sports have smaller budgets, so volunteers are crucial. They're passionate, they want to be close to the players, and sometimes they just want a souvenir—a shirt, a pin, a magnet. I've seen volunteers with lanyards full of pins and gifts.

CARLOS RESENDE – I've kept all my pins. And the jerseys I wore when I won titles—those are the ones I've held onto.

INTERVIEWER – I've got a few jerseys too. And you got a wall full of trophies at home. I remember one class with you—you were teaching us a handball move, that rotation with the arm. We'd been trying it for weeks, and you nailed it in one shot. We were all stunned.

CARLOS RESENDE – That's part of the fun.

INTERVIEWER – You've always been a role model to us—as a teacher and an athlete. Now, do you have any upcoming events or projects in sports management that will involve volunteers?

CARLOS RESENDE – At the moment, most major events are happening abroad. Two years ago, we hosted the European U-20 Championship, but this season, there won't be any large-scale championships here. Just smaller tournaments.

INTERVIEWER – That makes sense. And what about training?

CARLOS RESENDE – We're entering the final phase of the championships. For example, the U-16 final is happening now in Águas Santas. I assume the volunteers are local. I was invited to Paredes for a U-12 event—there might be volunteers there too, but those are smaller, more community-based competitions.

INTERVIEWER – Professor, I think last week's tournament was basketball-related, but

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I'm not sure which sport it was exactly. Do you remember?

CARLOS RESENDE – Right now, I believe it's the U-18 category. Or maybe U-16. Actually, today is May 30th—it starts today. There's Porto vs. Benfica at 6 a.m., then Sporting vs. Águas Santas at 8 a.m. It continues tomorrow and wraps up Sunday morning.

INTERVIEWER – That sounds right. These tournaments are federative, but they're organized by clubs that apply to host, correct?

CARLOS RESENDE – Yes, exactly. Even though they're under the Federation, the clubs take on the organization. And the volunteers are often long-time members of the club—people who've been involved for years.

INTERVIEWER – I know what you mean. I was a referee and now I'm a Federation's table official, so I'm often appointed to games. You get to see how everything operates. Last week's event in Porto was also U-18. It's all part of the development scale. Okay. Professor, thank you very much. Seriously. It made a lot of difference.

CARLOS RESENDE - Nothing, Inês. Thank you very much. Bye.

Annex III. Interview with Mr. João Monteiro

INTERVIEWER - First thing I have for you. Tell me a little about yourself, your professional background. Well, I saw that you're with the Andubal Federation, but I don't know what you do. But to be honest, I've been looking for stalking, but I haven't found it.

JOÃO - No, I'm the coordinator of coach education at the European Andubal Federation. That is, I organize everything that involves coaches, like coaching courses and defining curricula for the federations that are part of the European Federation to use in their coaching courses. I oversee coach licensing, meaning we have a license for each of our international competitions that coaches need to be qualified, and I have to oversee that too. And then everything that has to do with education too, for example, the terminology used in Andubal, the symbols used on the tactical board and I also promote education for all federations, for example, webinars, conferences, we organize scientific conferences, we even organized one here at this college, at the time it was also news.

INTERVIEWER - In what year?

JOÃO - In 2023.

INTERVIEWER - I bought what Professor Carlos Resende was saying.

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JOÃO - He was there too.

INTERVIEWER - Yes yes.

JOÃO - For example, we're now organizing a specialization course for goalkeepers, for coaches who only work as goalkeepers. We're also focusing on the grassroots level. We have, for example, grassroots conventions and coaching courses. This year, I've already been to Lithuania, the Faroe Islands, and Scotland. Above all, we're trying to understand what the federations need from us, from the European Federation, and trying to help them. Sometimes it's more financial resources, and if that's the case, that's fine. We also help through various projects, or sometimes it's simply through readers and knowledge. Other times, it's more organizational. If they need help with course structure, discussion material, or even a curriculum, there you go. Trying to understand how to put together a curriculum and a program has been a great job. I work with all the contacts from all the federations, and it's really great because each one needs something different, you know? So my job is to evaluate what they need and try to give it to them in a measured, fair way, which obviously everyone comes with money and we try to need more than money, what is needed for your development, handball in your country and that is very much what we do. We also restructured all coach education. We wrote a 120-page book on handball coach education. Instead of being guided by scientific disciplines, for example, a basketball course requires rules of the game, biomechanics, and sports psychology. Instead, we think about what a coach needs to master at the end of the course in terms of knowledge and understanding, understanding, and understanding. What a coach needs to execute, know how to execute, what a coach needs to know how to plan and organize, and what a coach needs to know how to evaluate and analyze. For each of the coach's levels (1, 2, 3, and 4), we have defined these skills: what are the skills for level 1, this, this, and this, for the subcategories, for level 2, for level 3, for level 4? This is the skills model.

INTERVIEWER - Okay, so you end up, instead of giving them the academic curriculum, that is, what they have to see, you end up directly evaluating the coach.

JOÃO - It's more focused on skills. We also provide a curriculum-program at the end, but it always starts with skills. In other words, we took all these skills and then approved them through some panels we had working with us at Experts. And what did we do? From there, we move on to a module. We try to create several modules, where the modules have learning goals, organizational objectives, content, and educational formats that we propose. Depending on the trainer's level, some educational formats make more sense

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than others, are more logical. Sometimes you don't need to be in person, but sometimes you do, depending on the skill you're trying to cover. We create a module and provide several modules for each level—examples, exemplary modules, as we call them—so they can see how a module would be structured. And we did this for all levels. After that, I no longer speak Portuguese, on top of that, in addition to that, we also created resumes, full resumes, you know?

INTERVIEWER - Here you can speak English, I understand English well.

JOÃO - But I meant we created comprehensive curricula, that is, covering them, because we have a minimum set of skills. For example, Level 1 is 60, now it's 35, Level 2 is 125. And we figured out how the European Federation would create its Level 1 and the entire curriculum, properly, and we published the curriculum. We've also published Level 3. And now, why did I go to Zvezda Farway in Scotland to take this course? We applied, we chose, for example, Scotland, they lack a lot of coaching education, they don't have experts. They have no jurisdiction whatsoever in Scotland, they don't do it. Basketball isn't part of their culture, so we thought, look, let's make a deal with them, and within our support to this Federation, we'll include a portion—we'll put 20,000 euros—for coach education. And we went there with our collectors and even organized a really cool promotional meeting, and it made a big difference, because they had never had this kind of education, right?

INTERVIEWER - Yes, because it was that question of being important.

João - And these are coaches who never go out to receive training because it costs a lot of money and they're not professionals. But if the European Federation goes there and provides education to those who don't have it, it makes a difference. Later, in Asia, it was a much higher level, a level 3, because they really need high-performance content, and we went there and it also went very well. So, we've been forming these partnerships to try to demonstrate what the European Federation's education model would be. But, above all, we don't want to cover everyone's education, we want to provide material. That's basically what my work there has been. I'm alone in education today, but I have a colleague helping me, who does half education and half technological development. I work with platforms, e-learning, and analytics. I don't know if you're familiar with analytics platforms like XPS and Sideline.

INTERVIEWER - Oh, yes, yes.

JOÃO - I already had some background in programming and there were already some things inside to analyze as well.

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INTERVIEWER - Well, As a table official now in the European championships, I also have friends who help me with statistics. For example, we have INGAME, which is an innovative project they did back then. In NBN23, which is a real application. We took a course to work on it across the entire Swiss base. You can watch, for example, a random football game, and you can see directly what's happening in Swiss. It's something we never had here. And, in fact, I believe there was still some confusion here, because one of the Federation's ideas was that instead of having, for example, three table officials and two referees, to have two referees and only one at the table managing everything, because there was only one talent to do it all.

JOÃO - Well, that is something the European Federation is actually considering, and we also discuss these things. Sometimes we have meetings to discuss whether we have a liability, which is a bit subjective. A friend of mine was doing a shot and wanted to shoot, for example, she was also jumping over here and was going to kick. And since there was one on this side here, she passed it back so he could kick. And, therefore, it's a passive game. Yes, passive play is somewhat subjective.

INTERVIEWER - From the referee's perspective, he might stand up and realize you're losing, and you're being somewhat passive about scoring. And I believe that, therefore, programming layers must be very complicated. For example, many juniors, young players, that end up appearing a little below the goal. And that can cause many problems. For example, we have a lot of problems in the derby. For example, the younger players, as soon as they're learning, send them to us—the strategy isn't the best—but they send the younger trainee referees, they send us to become educators, which is terrible, because neither the players know how to play nor the players know how to referee. And that problem makes me feel distrustful, because the kids don't know how to referee. The kids' coaches are kids too, so there's a lot of bias there. There's no ideological refereeing. It's not pedagogical at all.

JOÃO - But that's the case everywhere. Imagine, we also send our younger, less experienced referees to the younger competitions. You won't get many complaints about refereeing, in competitions where we have the best referees, in the champions leagues and such. But, for example, now I manage events as a sales manager, in addition to my job, to help out in the summer, you know? It's something we enjoy doing and we need people. So, we oversee the event, and there are always a lot of complaints, because who goes to the youth events? I'm collaborating this summer on the Youth Olympic Festival, which also features basketball.

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INTERVIEWER - Yes yes.

JOÃO - This year I'm responsible for the handball tea, and our referees are part of the Young Referees Program. This is their first time officiating an international match. So, of course, in the games, if I'm there, the coaches who know me, because of the coaches' dedication, make a decision, and they look at me and say, "João, you can't go."

INTERVIEWER — There was a day when we had this here, and now there aren't many streets. There are 3x3 teams playing, and all kinds of people. I was recently in Madeira, next to a street I thought I belonged to because there are no basic sports cultures there. In other words, it's chaotic—parents come, friends come, there's a lot of noise. And in basketball, we see this a lot, especially in bronze medal competitions. There's a lot of bickering.

JOÃO - Yes, basketball is a very good thing compared to handball. We always discuss this. We even had a conference almost exclusively to talk about it. Just like volleyball, which is our competitor, right?

INTERVIEWER — Yes, a few team sports have just emerged. The main ones are volleyball, basketball, and handball.

JOÃO - Volleyball had beach volleyball.

INTERVIEWER — Basketball created this three-man variation, which is proving very successful. And now we really have an official circuit.

JOÃO - I know, I know. We want to create something similar too—like 3x3 handball.

Beach handball exists, but it's not as prevalent as beach volleyball or three-a-side basketball. You can play volleyball almost anywhere. Handball is more complicated. Volleyball? You just need a beach, a net, and a ball.

INTERVIEWER — Yes, but you still need the lines, the setup. There have to be lines, a referee—it's sometimes hard to tell if it's a two-pointer or not.

JOÃO - Yes, I have a friend who plays there. They had competitions recently, and I talked about it… I watched them play, but there wasn't as much variation as in other sports.

INTERVIEWER — A parent or a kid who's not into handball can understand 3x3 volleyball easily. And that's fun. Volleyball is the same. But handball is complex.

JOÃO - Yes. But there's still dribbling, right? But if you pass the ball through the box and rely on dribbling, it's complicated. We want to simplify our sport.

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INTERVIEWER — I think handball is a great sport.It's truly a spectacle—I enjoy it more. If you compare football with handball, handball is much more exciting. And now, in the final, in the Final Four of Leagues, women's and men's champions, if you look at your cell phone to see a message, you miss the goal.

JOÃO - Well, in handball yes, in football you don't lose anything.

INTERVIEWER - Yes, because it's really fast. Sometimes there can be three goals in a minute.

JOÃO - But I, having had that handball desperation, realized that handball has evolved much more recently. Because it used to be very stagnant. The pace of the game has grown, it's truly rhythmic, different.

INTERVIEWER - I think that's true of any sport. But rule changes have also driven the evolution of handball. There have been some rule changes.

JOÃO - Do you want to pass it on to the volunteers?

INTERVIEWER - That was it. It's a bit about the volunteer side and less about the events side. One of the questions I had was, you already play handball, served as a manager, and also worked on a lot of events. What's your process for setting up the kids and the surrounding areas for handball? What's your process? Do you do it through contacts? Do they talk to the federations and they send the kids? Do they talk to the coaches and they send them?

JOÃO - We have a platform. We send a link to all federations, and they send it to the entire community, either in their newsletter or via email. They register, and we never have any problems with volunteers. Volunteering at a handball event isn't just about going to the closed-doors and helping out. And they can watch the games, they always get t-shirts.

INTERVIEWER - Yes, it's a bit of that too. For example, in basketball, for example, here it's like this: the kids stand around, the younger kids take off their shirts, stand there, clean the floor, and watch the game. Sometimes they ask for a walk—the kids love to ask for a walk. But they also do this, they rotate roles. Team guides are always present for the entire competition. One question: does your team guide stay with the handball team? Do you stay in hotels, do you keep everything?

JOÃO - Yes, they stay in the same hotel. Because I had a lot of trouble. And they follow the team everywhere.

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INTERVIEWER - Then they even become friends, you know? I still talk to some of the girls, it's something like that too. But I had this doubt a lot. Because it was something that shocked me. Because I was talking to one of the girls. I said "Oh, but your other guides do not do that". She said they only have one in Portugal. She was a girl who had been on the national team since she was 14. She was already 18 or something. She would have already gone to Lithuania. Croatia, Greece. It had everything there. And only in Portugal did they have a team attaché

JOÃO - In my field, at the Federation, I don't work with... I only play in competitions, organizing events. But I don't work with volunteers. The volunteers are always turning over papers. Because sometimes, there's one at the Hotel reception. That only lasts for an afternoon. And then she goes at night to do something else.

INTERVIEWER - We feel this a lot in the game. In the logistics part. Those people who are in the games. Then it's time to give the game away. After one year and then the next. And we have three volunteer roles. We have those who do it all, the mopers, who deliver statistics all the way up there and water. Everything is done. They're field volunteers. We have field chiefs. They're mostly made up of older folks. Like coaches from here. People who were my coaches. Who are the ones who are there giving out the locker room keys. Guarantee that the key is required. Where they can get in the way and everything. And then we have the Team Attachés. Which supposedly had to be guys over eighteen years old. But we ran out of people. So now we accept guys as young as sixteen. Because there are no people. For example, after Covid, there were six teams. The following year there were twenty-two. The following year there were sixteen teams. In other words, we were all here. Here we had to take on a lot of people. And then we had extra people. This year there will be twenty. And we are left with one half. And for example. Me, my sister, we're already working. Which means I can't have the two weeks in August. So we lost a lot of volunteers. Who stays? And how can they motivate those who are already here to stay? And bring in new people. Because sometimes the issue is bringing in new people.

JOÃO - It's important. But I think that, above all, in addition to having volunteers, it's always a temporary role, right? I see many volunteers who are actuaries for two or three years, but never more. They usually end up moving on to other roles.

INTERVIEWER - Yes, I started as a field volunteer, then I went to Team Attaché and now I can't go. We have a girl who has been there since 2011. She's been a volunteer ever since. But this case is the rarest.

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JOÃO - We always have a questionnaire for all volunteers and teams to understand where volunteers can improve and then there is education for volunteers.

INTERVIEWER – João, I'd like to hear more about how volunteers are trained and integrated during major sports events. What's the process like?

JOÃO – Volunteers usually train with the Organizing Committee, but we also provide feedback to them. Some teams don't respond to the feedback forms, but others do—and often in detail. Typically, around 80% of the feedback is positive.

INTERVIEWER – And what about the remaining 20%?

JOÃO – There are always a few issues, usually related to language barriers or attitudes that didn't sit well. But that feedback helps us adjust the training. It's a cyclical process. For example, next year we're organizing two championships back-to-back. Some volunteers will return with experience, but many new ones will join because they've heard good things.

INTERVIEWER – So it's not just about training—it's also about relationships?

JOÃO – Exactly. Volunteers often become part of the team. They go to dinner with them, help with materials and equipment—they become the team's eyes and ears.

INTERVIEWER – That sounds like a strong bond. Does it help resolve issues more quickly?

JOÃO – Definitely. Sometimes a volunteer's simple question can prevent problems from escalating. If you hear something from the team and act quickly, it's resolved before it becomes a bigger issue. Then you just inform the team: "This happened, and we handled it." It's much faster that way. Education for development is key. It's not just basic training—we need experienced volunteers who can be assertive and who've received feedback from previous teams. That makes a big difference.

INTERVIEWER – How are volunteers treated during events?

JOÃO – It varies. In some cases, volunteers eat separately from the teams due to cost—like where there's a 4-star standard. But that wasn't in my federation.

INTERVIEWER – And in other federations?

JOÃO – I've seen national federations where volunteers eat sandwiches while the team dines at the hotel restaurant. But at the EHF, volunteers eat with the team. That inclusion makes a big difference. If you give them that chance, they feel part of the group.

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INTERVIEWER – Do they stay at the same hotel?

JOÃO – Yes, I've stayed with them. They go to games with the team, they offer quality service because they know what they're doing. And if they don't, they ask a coordinator. It's a positive experience.

INTERVIEWER – Does that help with retention?

JOÃO – For sure. It's easier to keep them for another year or two. But I don't think most stay beyond three years. What are some of the biggest challenges you've seen volunteer guides face during tournaments?

INTERVIEWER – One of the biggest is managing their free day. Some teams want to go to the beach, others want to explore different places. If the volunteers are younger, you really have to keep an eye on them. Some want to rent a bus, join a tournament, or walk around the harbor. I've seen it all.

JOÃO – That sounds like a lot to coordinate.

INTERVIEWER – It is. I remember being in Leça with some teams. They asked for the day off to go to the beach or the city center. I went twice with the Croatian team and had to coordinate with transportation to rent a bus. They paid for the extra cost to tour the port. I had to go with them, act as a guide, and make sure everything ran smoothly.

JOÃO – So you're not just managing logistics—you're actively involved?

INTERVIEWER – Exactly. Sometimes we have two free days depending on the length of the tournament, and less experienced volunteers struggle with that. They want to explore, but someone has to coordinate everything—call the transport company, check with the Federation, confirm availability. And then there's the cost.

JOÃO – Do teams usually cover those expenses?

INTERVIEWER – It varies. Renting a bus for a day can cost around 200 euros. I had two teams handle it differently—one split the cost among themselves, 5 euros each. Another had an extra budget and invited me to join. But there's a lot of discrepancy between teams, and that can feel a bit strange.

JOÃO – In these tournaments, you always get volunteers. But in others, like the Champions League, it's different. It's a hallmark event—there are lines of volunteers waiting to join.

INTERVIEWER – Because of the prestige?

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JOÃO – Yes. Imagine being a volunteer and getting to watch Champions League games. They have access—12 credentials tucked in the boot on the side.

INTERVIEWER – That's a huge perk. Tickets for those games aren't cheap.

JOÃO – Exactly. Even the cheapest seats cost around 175 euros, and some spots go up to 400 or 500 euros. Volunteers are right there, watching the game. So if you offer a good product, you can still maintain good practices—provide training, a t-shirt, and a memorable experience.

INTERVIEWER – João, when it comes to youth competitions like under-16s and under-18s, what are the main challenges you've observed?

JOÃO – The biggest issue is that access is often too open. Anyone can come in as they please. And I think the problem is deeper—our sports, like volleyball and basketball, rely heavily on volunteering. Actually, there are two things: volunteering and volunteerness.

INTERVIEWER – What do you mean by that?

JOÃO – It's not just about organizing competitions. The entire structure is built on volunteers, no one gets paid. If they do, it's just to cover gas costs. It's symbolic.

INTERVIEWER – So even in youth tournaments, it's all volunteer-driven?

JOÃO – Yes.

INTERVIEWER – Who usually steps in to help?

JOÃO – Besides the coach, who might receive R$200 or R$250 to train the team, it's mostly club volunteers. Managers who are parents, people connected to sponsors, or directors who simply love the sport and the community.

INTERVIEWER – That passion really drives it. Let me shift gears a bit—have you ever had a personal experience, as a player or coach, where a volunteer made a big impact?

JOÃO – Definitely. I've had both positive and negative experiences. One that stands out was last year in Granada. My Austrian team was playing in Barcelona at one of the biggest international handball tournaments in Europe.

INTERVIEWER – What happened?

JOÃO – The volunteers at the scoring table weren't taking it seriously. They were on their phones, chatting, not focused. It reminded me of being in school—kids talking while the teachers trying to teach. They were young, around 15 or 16, and it was 40 degrees in Barcelona. It's normal—they're kids.

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INTERVIEWER – Was that an under-18 tournament?

JOÃO – Actually, it was under-17. And yes, it was Austria versus Germany. A high-level match, but the volunteers weren't prepared for that kind of pressure.

INTERVIEWER – Have you ever experienced a situation where a volunteer's distraction affected the outcome of a game?

JOÃO – Yes, I remember in this match, a goal went into the other team's net, but the volunteers mistakenly credited it to them. I was furious. The score was tied—it was a crucial moment. They apologized and corrected it, but the coach had to step in to fix the result. It created a really uncomfortable situation. We ended up losing by one goal, and that mistake may have cost us the match.

INTERVIEWER – That's tough. Mistakes like that can really shift the atmosphere.

JOÃO – Absolutely. And as a referee, I've also seen how small errors can escalate. Sometimes there's no official goal and it's unclear who scored. You see the arrow turn the wrong way, the referee points the wrong direction, and suddenly everyone's arguing. Parents get involved, emotions run high. But I've also had great experiences with volunteers.

INTERVIEWER – Can you share a positive one?

JOÃO – Sure. During a coaching course in Slovenia two years ago, a young coach was volunteering. He loved what he was learning and asked to participate. We were the only ones eligible to include him, so we did. He joined us at level 4, the highest level. He was humble, dedicated and incredibly helpful—especially since he was local. At the end, everyone chipped in, gave him 500 bucks as a thank-you. He cried. We took a photo together. It was a beautiful moment.

INTERVIEWER – That kind of appreciation really shows the impact volunteers can have.

JOÃO – Definitely. I've had friends who volunteered as team guides. They'd scout referees, watch games and give feedback. One time, with the Irish team, they lost every match but won a prize for their spirit. I had dinner with them—they were great people.

INTERVIEWER – Sounds like those connections really matter.

JOÃO – They do. That sense of community is what I love most about sports. It's not about the gym or personal training—it's about being part of a group. And you've been involved in major events too?

INTERVIEWER – Yes, I volunteered at the U-20 B division tournament. We WON the

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semifinal to Russia and the congress center was packed. Police had to be stationed at the doors. People were almost invading the field. That energy is unforgettable. I also love watching the Olympics—even at 2 a.m. I'll stay up for any final.

JOÃO – Sports clearly mean a lot to you. Have you seen political tensions affect events?

INTERVIEWER – Unfortunately, yes. Last year, Russia was excluded, but Israel participated. During one match, we had to stand at the door with team flags and shirts. The Israeli team had armed security guards. The girls couldn't leave their rooms or socialize. In the final, while other teams exchanged shirts, they stayed isolated. There was even an incident where a woman jumped into the VIP area and raised a Palestinian flag during an Israel match.

JOÃO – That must have been intense.

INTERVIEWER – It was. We were prepared for it, but it still shook the atmosphere. Political tensions can really complicate the spirit of sport. João, I'd like to hear more about your experience with team security and volunteer identification at international competitions. What stands out?

JOÃO – One moment that really stuck with me was during the European Championship in Montenegro last year. The Israeli team had armed security, and we actually asked them to conceal their weapons because it made others feel uneasy. When the Israel match was about to start, we anticipated tension, but thankfully everything remained calm.

INTERVIEWER – That must have been intense. Did the Israeli team get to enjoy the event like the others?

JOÃO – Not really. I felt sorry for them. The girls couldn't fully experience the tournament. Their guide stayed alone in a separate hotel, and they were isolated from the rest of the teams. It was their last competition, and they missed out on the social aspect that makes these events special.

INTERVIEWER – That social experience is a big part of it, right?

JOÃO – Absolutely. A guide who's been doing this for 11 years, really emphasized that. He helped the girls engage with the event—media day, photo sessions, all the little things that make it memorable. But when security is tight and restrictions are heavy, it's hard for the athletes to enjoy those moments.

INTERVIEWER – How do you manage identification and access for volunteers and

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guides?

JOÃO – That's another challenge. We use polo shirts to distinguish roles—field volunteers wear yellow, red or orange shirts; guides have different colored polos; and organization staff and field leaders have their own colors. But the credentials are often the same, and that causes confusion. Some badges are large and include a photo and role—like "volunteer" or "team guide" with the country code.

INTERVIEWER - In basketball the credentials are small and generic. For example, I've seen volunteers reuse last year's credentials to get in this year. Polo shirts can be swapped, and credentials passed around. It's not secure. One time, a Portuguese player was injured and came to watch the game. She didn't have a credential, but her friend—a volunteer—helped her get in. It was confusing. The organization wasn't informed and the girl wasn't officially registered. It showed how weak our identification system can be. João, let's talk about volunteer uniforms and identification.

JOÃO – Yes, that's something we've felt strongly about.

INTERVIEWER - Last year, in the FIBA Championship, the volunteer uniforms—especially the polos — were problematic. We weren't wearing yellow and just giving a shirt to the guides caused confusion. Teams started assuming they were part of their squad. I've even had guides show up in the same uniform as players, and it becomes hard to distinguish them.

JOÃO – Shouldn't guides avoid wearing the national team's jersey?

INTERVIEWER – They should. I think our guides aren't supposed to wear the jersey of the country they're assigned to. But I've seen it happen. Not during official ceremonies like the final or the medal ceremony, but throughout the tournament, yes. I personally wore different Croatia jerseys during THE event—every single day.

JOÃO – So polo shirts aren't consistently used?

INTERVIEWER – Not at all. We wear polos only to pick up teams at the airport. After that, they're forgotten. I've never seen a guide wear a polo shirt for the entire tournament. They're always in team jerseys, which makes it hard to identify them.

JOÃO – That sounds confusing for spectators and officials.

INTERVIEWER – Exactly. I had a friend who was guiding the Albanian team. He looked just like the players—same age, same build, same jersey. In photos, you couldn't tell he wasn't part of the team. The only way I recognize guides is because I've known them for

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years and they're always behind the bench. Is this different from other sports?

JOÃO – Yes, especially in handball. There's more of a sense of honor and respect. I feel like handball volunteers take their roles more seriously than in some other sports. But even then, we've had incidents.

INTERVIEWER – Are there any equipment rules that help?

JOÃO – There are some. In volleyball, for example, the emotional connection to uniforms is strong. But we've had issues with things like requesting timeouts or fouls. Sometimes the officials don't see it and the coach is left gesturing from the bench. It's frustrating.

INTERVIEWER – Has technology helped improve that?

JOÃO – A bit. In more professional competitions, we now use a buzzer system. Coaches press a button to request a timeout. But that's only in the Champions League. At the grassroots level, they're trying to innovate, but it's still a work in progress.

INTERVIEWER – João, let's start with the European Championships. How is volunteer scheduling typically handled for events like that?

JOÃO – It depends on the organizing team each year. Sometimes they stick to the same model from previous editions, but other times they innovate. The events department of our federation handles the European Championships, while my department focuses on education. This year, I was invited to be the Venue Manager.

INTERVIEWER – And who supervises the volunteers?

JOÃO – Honestly, I'm not sure. That's not directly under my role.

INTERVIEWER – Do you think Portugal is behind other European countries when it comes to organizing sports events outside of football?

JOÃO – I'd say we're more or less on par. Our main challenges are infrastructure, government support and funding. People often assume we're disorganized, but when we want to be, we're quite capable.

INTERVIEWER – What strengths do you think Portugal brings to event organization?

JOÃO – Calmness and flexibility. That's something Austrians and Germans often lack. Portuguese people are great at adapting to unexpected situations and finding practical solutions. It's part of our culture. Have you experienced that firsthand?

INTERVIEWER – Definitely. Last year, during the first game of the tournament, things went wrong. My sister was texting me that the game would be delayed and just as I

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arrived, someone dunked, which made the backboard fall and damaged the floor. We lost time, and the game was pushed back. The other team wasn't happy, and we had to scramble to fix things—call the hotel, adjust dinner times, deal with late arrivals. It was chaotic, but we managed.

JOÃO -That kind of flexibility seems essential But financially, we're still behind. Volunteers in education are fewer and coaches abroad earn much more. Our facilities are often under-equipped. I've refereed games where the conditions were poor—no proper flooring, no stretching space.

INTERVIEWER – What about sponsorship?

JOÃO – Sponsors in Austria have more money, but space is limited. I've had to turn down sponsors because there wasn't room on the team's shirts.

INTERVIEWER – And your current role?

JOÃO – I work part-time as a training coordinator and also with the federation. I supervise training, teach and manage coaching programs.

INTERVIEWER – And in terms of management, who oversees things?

JOÃO – That would be Mrs. Maria José Carvalho. She's the supervisor.

INTERVIEWER – João, last question. You've attended many events and seen how things operate across different countries. Do you notice any trends in Portuguese events—especially regarding volunteers and the overall scale?

JOÃO – Absolutely. There's a clear upward trend. We're seeing record-breaking numbers of spectators and that naturally leads to more volunteers. More spectators mean more logistical needs and that brings in more people. Plus, the number of participating teams is growing.

INTERVIEWER – Can you give an example?

JOÃO – Sure. At the European Championship, we expanded to 24 teams, including Emerging Nations. That alone required a significant increase in volunteers. So yes, there are more opportunities, more teams, and more volunteers.

INTERVIEWER – What about the quality of volunteers?

JOÃO – That's improving too. I've noticed that countries hosting competitions tend to have better-qualified volunteers, especially when they start young. For instance, Slovenia is a relatively large country but struggles with volunteer coordination.

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Montenegro, on the other hand, is much smaller and had fewer volunteers—but they were incredibly well-prepared and efficient.

INTERVIEWER – So smaller countries might have an advantage?

JOÃO – In terms of volunteer quality, yes. Smaller populations often mean tighter networks and better control. In Portugal, for example, the Federation knows everyone. That makes organizing much easier.

INTERVIEWER – Do you see more young people getting involved?

JOÃO – It's hard to say. I don't have exact numbers on children volunteering. But I do know that even small incentives—like a bit of pocket money or community recognition—can make a difference.

INTERVIEWER – That's encouraging. Thanks for sharing your insights.

Annex IV. Interview with Ms. Lucia Radosevic

A former Team Attaché of the interviewed conducted this interview via Whatsapp text messages.

INTERVIEWER - "Tell me about the main idea you have of volunteers."

LUCIA - "I greatly appreciate volunteers in any field of work because they show how selflessly and unconditionally they give their knowledge and time to help, facilitate, and be of service to others."

INTERVIEWER - "Do you have Team Attachés with you in all countries/tournaments?"

LUCIA - "At all the championships I've been to, from European to World, we've always had our own Attacheś."

INTERVIEWER - "If yes, do they stay in the hotel with you?"

LUCIA - "They were mostly not staying with us at the hotel, but they were available to us via cell phone for any questions or potential problems."

INTERVIEWER - "What is the major difference on having a Team Attaché for you?"

LUCIA - "In my opinion, an attaché is a lifesaver for every team. Because they are a person from that city who is familiar with everything. That makes everything absolutely easier. The staff doesn't waste time on less important things, but can fully dedicate themselves to the championship."

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INTERVIEWER - "Would you say Team Attachés are crucial in major sports events?"

LUCIA - "Personal or team attaché I can't say that he is of crucial importance or the most important person who brings some superiority, but he is definitely the extended right hand of the team that saves in a million situations."

INTERVIEWER - "Do you remember any remarkable moment with any volunteer/team attaché?"

LUCIA - "Maybe as a team we have always been lucky with our attaché because almost every year we get a cheerful, cheerful, communicative person who loves sports and loves to communicate with us.

I don't have a special moment to highlight. Or maybe I do for you. When we played for third place in Portugal with your country, you wore our shirt out of respect for us from the very beginning. I can't even imagine how it felt for you, but you were there for us and you were truly happy no matter that we beat your friends in that game. And that's where you showed your greatness as a person and once again, thank you very much for that."

INTERVIEWER - "Thank you so much for your answers!

It means a lot to me you took the time to answer me (and that I left a good impression on you)

I wish you all the best and please send my compliments to the rest of the staff, tell Tatjana thank you for providing me with your contacts and tell the girls I say hi (and I hope to see you all in Portugal again someday)".

Annex V. Interview with Mr. Krešimir Kozlevčar

A former Team Attaché of the interviewed conducted this interview via Whatsapp text and audio messages.

KRESIMIR - "Hi, I will send you like this because we are in a tournament now and I'm really really busy but I'm really glad to help you so I hope this will be something that you can use, so for question one."

INTERVIEWER - "Tell me about the main idea you have of volunteers."

KRESIMIR - "The main… well… just to let me think… The main idea is that the Attaché can help us with everything, including the competition, including the schedule, times and lots of information in terms of where we are staying and a lot of tourist questions. For

example, where to shop, where to buy things and where to get something if we need it and this is the answer."

INTERVIEWER - "Do you have Team Attachés with you in all countries/tournaments?"

KRESIMIR - "We have had it, we've had an Attaché in all the countries that we were involved in European Championships, so I was with under 16 in Spain, in Portugal, in Bulgaria and now in Lithuania. Attaché is really important because we really need it."

INTERVIEWER - "If yes, do they stay in the hotel with you?"

KRESIMIR - "I really don't know where the Attaché is staying but I think it's a really good idea that the Attaché stays with the team. When the team is going to the practices or to the games it's really good to have him there."

INTERVIEWER - "What is the major difference on having a Team Attaché for you?"

KRESIMIR - "The main difference is that we have somebody that knows the language. Sometimes there is a big language barrier and it's important to communicate and it makes our lives easier when we have really big concentration on the competition and on our team it's really good to have somebody."

INTERVIEWER - "Would you say Team Attachés are crucial in major sports events?"

KRESIMIR - "Yes. I think Attachés are really crucial to have in major events because it makes everything easier."

INTERVIEWER - "Do you remember any remarkable moment with any volunteer/team attaché?"

KRESIMIR - "We remember that you were our best Team Attaché ever. You were rooting for us, that felt really really good. We knew how to go to town and how to get back. We got to know your country and everything we needed you provided so everything was really really good and stayed in our memory for a long time. And the best part is that we won the bronze medal and every little detail was important because we were under a lot of stress, a lot of things and you made our job easier so that's it.

I hope the answers are good for you, I hope you get everything from that course and if you need more answers, we will provide answers. All the team of Croatia say hi and wish all the best to you so looking forward to seeing you again."

INTERVIEWER - "Thank you so much!! I really appreciate it and good luck on the tournament."

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Annex VI. Interview with Ms. Helena Oliveira

INTERVIEWER – Helena, I have a few questions for you today. First of all, you are commonly called the "mother of volunteers"—can I put that in writing?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Of course, I don't mind. It's a title I've earned with affection.

INTERVIEWER – Wonderful. To start, could you tell me a bit about yourself, the roles you play within the Federation, and how you arrived at this position?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Currently, I'm an advisor to the President of the Portuguese Basketball Federation. I often say I do everything and nothing—I do whatever the President needs. That includes preparing documents, reviewing legislation, and organizing materials for meetings, often with input from colleagues across departments.

Beyond that, I manage three major projects. One is the 3x3 BasketArt initiative, which promotes urban street courts as artistic spaces. Another is the Valorizar Program, which provides financial incentives to clubs and associations based on a points system. These points are earned through various criteria and converted into euros.

INTERVIEWER – That sounds like a complex system.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It is. Within Valorizar, we have several branches:

Valorizar Seleções Nacionais, which rewards clubs where national team athletes played between U-12 and U-18. For example, Miguel Queiroz plays for Porto now, but the clubs that developed him in his youth receive the incentives.

Valorizar Centros de Treinamento, which supports clubs with athletes in our training centers.

Valorizar Competições Nacionais, which allocates financial support across eight national competitions, including men's and women's leagues, Proliga and BCR. Each has its own criteria, and the higher the competition level, the more demanding the criteria.

We evaluate clubs on things like entertainment value, team presentation and whether they sign athlete contracts. At the end of the season, points are converted into financial support. The Federation currently allocates around €400,000 annually for this.

INTERVIEWER – That's a significant investment.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It is. I also manage the FPB Wilson assistance project, which distributes basketballs to clubs based on criteria. And since last year, I've been handling

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the foreign athlete legalization process, following changes in government policy. Foreign players now receive professional-level treatment, and we ensure they meet legal requirements to register.

INTERVIEWER – That's quite a portfolio. How did you first get involved with the Federation?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – I joined in 1999, recruited by a company organizing the Junior World Cup in Portugal. Spain won that tournament—Gasol was there as a junior. I was hired because my resume showed I had played, coached and refereed basketball in São Miguel. After the tournament, the then-President invited me to join the Federation permanently.

INTERVIEWER – And you've stayed connected ever since?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes. I've always advised the President, starting in marketing and events, then moving into finance, which is my academic background. I served briefly as secretary-general but stepped down to focus on finance. In 2013, I left for a new challenge with Odisseias, working in various companies and spending a year back in São Miguel. Eventually, I returned to the mainland and rejoined the Federation. My passion for basketball brought me back.

INTERVIEWER – What was your first major event like?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – The 1999 Junior World Cup was my first. I coordinated hotels and transportation across Faro, Aveiro, Lisbon, and Porto. It was before smartphones and WhatsApp—each call cost a fortune. We acted like a travel agency, moving teams by bus or plane. The final phase was held at the Pavilhão Atlântico, the first sporting event there after Expo 98. Spain faced the U.S. in the final, and the venue was so full we had to close the doors before the match began.

INTERVIEWER – That must've been unforgettable.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It was. I've always enjoyed coordinating logistics, collecting data and communicating with teams. In 2009, we hosted the European U16 Men 's Championship across three cities—Santa Maria da Feira, Oliveira de Azeméis and São João da Madeira. Each had its own pavilion, hotel, and transport company. Every night, we'd deliver printed schedules to all the hotels, sometimes working until 5 a.m. It was exhausting but rewarding.

INTERVIEWER – Helena, organizing these events must be a huge challenge. How have things changed over the years?

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HELENA OLIVEIRA – It's changed dramatically. Today, everything is sent by email or WhatsApp. Just yesterday at 1 a.m., I was coordinating transportation and training schedules via WhatsApp, and everyone was instantly informed. It's incredible how much things have evolved.

INTERVIEWER – It must be fascinating to have witnessed all these phases.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Absolutely. I've been through it all—from handwritten notes to instant messaging. For example, the European Championship we held in 2009 was a massive challenge. We had three pavilions, three hotels, and three transportation companies. In contrast, the 2006 Championship in Lisbon was much easier. All teams stayed in one hotel, and games were held in the two Luz pavilions. Everything was centralized—meals, transport, training. We just had to update Excel sheets with new schedules.

INTERVIEWER – That sounds much more manageable.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It was. Back then, Division A had 16 teams, and Division B could go up to 24. I remember one year we had 22 teams. In 2001, we organized three European Championships in Portugal, but they were much smaller—six to eight teams each.

INTERVIEWER – And in 2021, I remember the Challenger event due to Covid.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes, that was a special case. The original plan was for the Juniors World Cup, but Covid changed everything. My niece went to the Challenger too—she's now playing 3x3.

INTERVIEWER – When do preparations for these events begin?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Very early. For the European Championships, we start as soon as the previous edition ends. Last December, we were already negotiating with hotels. FIBA visits the hotels and by January we're sending flight and logistics info to federations. We ask them to fly into Porto and provide their flight plans.

INTERVIEWER – Have hotels become more difficult to work with?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes. Years ago, hotels welcomed us because we brought revenue. Now, with the tourism boom, they prefer guests who sleep, eat breakfast, and spend the day sightseeing. Our groups require more work—special meals, constant laundry and late-night schedules.

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INTERVIEWER – I've seen that too. Last year, the final day was chaotic—jersey exchanges, noise. I think it was Montenegro that caused a stir at the buffet.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Some hotels haven't hosted teams for two years because of incidents like that. It's a big shift and it's part of the challenge we face.

INTERVIEWER – And the planning starts earlier now?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Definitely. In the past, we could adjust room numbers at the last minute. Now, by March, everything must be finalized. We start collecting data from teams early—arrival times, room needs—and I disseminate that information widely. I prefer to overshare than leave someone uninformed. Everything is interconnected.

INTERVIEWER – Do you still manage multiple events?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Not anymore. These days, I focus solely on this one. I used to handle many.

INTERVIEWER – And at this European Championship, are you responsible for volunteers?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – No, my area is hotels. But because I start collecting data early, I become the point of contact for teams. They recognize me, and I end up fielding questions—even outside my scope. If I know the answer, I can help. If not, I direct them to the right person. It's important that information flows smoothly.

INTERVIEWER – That makes sense. Before I joined in 2021, I remember speaking with a guide named Tânia.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes, I remember her. Hotel logistics often overlap with the guides' responsibilities, especially with scheduling. So I work closely with them to ensure they have what they need. Guides are essential—they're our face to the teams, our direct link. This is a high-level competition: the Feminine Division A, the second-largest in Europe. Many of these athletes are already professionals.

INTERVIEWER – I'd like to talk about the role of volunteers in these events. From your perspective, how important are they?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – They're absolutely essential. Our Team Attachés, for example, are the ones who ensure transport runs on time and that information flows smoothly. They're our point of contact with the teams and they play a crucial role on the ground. I've been organizing basketball events for as long as I can remember and volunteers

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have always been a vital part of the process. It's incredibly rewarding to arrive at a venue and see a group of people willing to give their time to help.

INTERVIEWER – That sense of community must be powerful.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It is. We're professionals at the Federation, but we also volunteer many hours. Seeing others participate with joy and commitment is a great satisfaction—not just for me, but for the Federation President and many others. Our goal is not only to receive help from volunteers but to ensure they feel valued and have a meaningful experience. I often joke with them, saying, "I don't need to manage this anymore—you've got it!" Because sports isn't just about athletes. It includes coaches, referees and sports management too.

INTERVIEWER – And the experience itself can be educational, right?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Absolutely. We hope that the European Championship teaches valuable lessons—both good and bad. I recently spoke with a Field Chief who's also a coach. He told me he's enjoying the calm and learning from the experience. Volunteers, many of whom are players or coaches themselves, observe training sessions, drills and team dynamics. They pick up ideas and sometimes they see things they'd never want to replicate. It's all part of the learning process.

INTERVIEWER – Constructive criticism is key.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. You learn from both the good and the bad. The goal is for volunteers to enjoy themselves, stay passionate—ideally about basketball—and grow from the experience. These lessons apply beyond sports. In fact, many people at the Federation started as volunteers. Inês Antunes, for example, is now the Administrative Coordinator of the National Teams. I myself began as a volunteer in São Miguel.

INTERVIEWER – I did too. I've been volunteering since 2016.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – I remember organizing summer camps and working with the São Miguel Basketball Association. I volunteered in administration and refereeing. Even now, I feel the need to give back. Though I work at the Federation, I recently started volunteering on Sunday nights—just a small contribution, but it helps me feel useful. I think it's something our society needs, not just in sports.

INTERVIEWER – That's the heart of my thesis—understanding what drives volunteers. One Croatian coach told me that having a guide takes pressure off the team. They can

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focus on the competition without worrying about logistics. In sports where there's no clear leader, things can feel chaotic. Volunteers become that safe haven—someone to ask questions, someone who's always there.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – That's true. Volunteers step in and take care of everything. They're so invested that sometimes they don't even wait to be asked—they just act. That kind of dedication is beautiful.

INTERVIEWER – And it's not just about the work. It's about wanting to be there. I've seen volunteers give up beach days to spend time in a gym. I had a day off and still stayed to watch games with the kids. They genuinely want to be part of it. And experience matters. A volunteer who's been here five or six times solves problems faster than someone new. Retention is important. Last year, I handled things much more easily than in my first year. You learn how to respond, how to motivate others. I remember someone telling me a goalkeeper tactic—if he saves a penalty, he's the hero; if not, he's still a good player. It stuck with me. It's about learning how to inspire volunteers too. And teamwork among guides is vital.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Definitely. This year we have new guides, but also experienced ones. The veterans pass on their knowledge, explain procedures, and help the newcomers. That collaboration is essential—and it applies to other roles too.

INTERVIEWER – Like field managers. I've seen Ventura, Mr. Felipe, Beatriz Trindade and Francisca—all experienced and committed.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Experience helps us repeat routines, but we mustn't get complacent. There's always something new to solve. We stay alert and look for ways to improve.

INTERVIEWER – Even feedback from younger volunteers can spark change. One told me I always solved problems the same way. It made me reflect—maybe there's a better approach. Even if they don't have the solution, they help us think differently.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. That's how we grow.

INTERVIEWER – Helena, sometimes even less experienced volunteers offer fresh perspectives. They might ask, "Why not solve it this way?" and it actually works. That's why I wanted to ask about the recruitment process. When I spoke with the Andebol Federation, they mentioned having an official portal where volunteers sign up. But here, I've only seen a form shared on Instagram. How does recruitment work for guides, camp

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leaders and other volunteer roles?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Great question. Team Attachés are recruited primarily based on expertise. We don't open public applications for guide roles. Manuel Albano, who's from the region, knows many of the young people personally. Since guides work full-time with teams and stay at the hotels, we need people we trust. That recruitment is very direct and handled by Manuel.

INTERVIEWER – So it's more personal and localized?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. This year, I haven't had contact with the new recruits myself, but it's usually Manuel who manages that. Field Chiefs are also recruited through word of mouth, mostly from the coaching community. Being a coach isn't mandatory, but most field directors are coaches. That recruitment is overseen by Paulo Neta, the Technical Director of the Porto Basketball Association. They usually start with previous candidates and add new ones who step up.

INTERVIEWER – And the other volunteer roles?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Those are open to the public. Cátia's team handles that. We post the form on the website and anyone interested can sign up and share their availability. We've had volunteers send in their timetables, which helps us allocate tasks.

INTERVIEWER – I've noticed that all tasks are treated with equal importance.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Absolutely. Cleaning the floor is just as important as guiding a team or coordinating transport. Every role is valid, precise and necessary. Occasionally, we get someone who says, "I don't want to do that," but they're usually young and still learning. They're present, watching games, engaging with the event—that's already valuable.

INTERVIEWER – It's a collective effort.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. Everyone contributes, and that's what makes the event successful. Portugal has a strong reputation with FIBA. Every time we apply to host, we're awarded the event. In fact, there have been times when FIBA didn't have an organizer and asked Portugal directly, "Would you like to host another one?" That's a testament to our volunteers and our organizational strength.

INTERVIEWER – Do you also recruit through clubs?

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HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes, though less so now. We've had volunteers from Maia and other areas. Last year, I spoke with two volunteers who came from Lisbon just for the event. They stayed at their grandmother's house nearby. My niece had a similar experience—she's from São Miguel. She came to help with accreditation in 2019 and later became an Attaché for the Russian National Team. These are valuable experiences.

INTERVIEWER – That's inspiring. I've also volunteered at summer camps—making sandwiches, managing kids even handing out bread and butter at 3 a.m.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – I've done that too! It's all part of the journey.

INTERVIEWER - Now, another important question: how do you divide tasks between volunteers and Federation professionals? For example, who decides who works at the door or handles logistics? Is it based on difficulty or responsibility?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It's a bit of both. LOC (Local Organizing Committee) tasks are divided based on the nature of the role. Some tasks, like door management, are typically assigned to volunteers. Others, involving sensitive logistics or higher responsibility, go to Federation staff. But all roles are important. The distinction is more about the level of responsibility, time consuming and the need for experience.

INTERVIEWER – Helena, I've noticed that some people working in the LOC (Local Organizing Committee) seem to be volunteers. Is that right?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes and no. Some LOC members are volunteers, but not all. Over the years, many people have progressed through different roles—just like you might start as a Mopper (floor cleaner) and eventually take on more responsibility. It depends on the knowledge we gain about each person. There's a core group we rely on for tasks that require more availability and commitment—these are usually Federation staff or long-time volunteers we trust. Then there are more transient volunteers who help with simpler tasks.

INTERVIEWER – So even roles like ticket control are handled by volunteers?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. Even though admission is free, we still have volunteers managing public control—cutting tickets, monitoring entrances. But they're always coordinated by someone from the Federation. It's about balancing responsibility and time commitment. Just like guides are selected based on experience, we assign tasks that require more knowledge to people we know and trust.

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INTERVIEWER – Have you ever reassigned someone during an event based on how they performed?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It's rare, because we try to have everything prepared in advance. But yes, sometimes someone comes in for one task—say, statistics—and ends up showing great potential. Over time, as people return and gain experience, they take on more responsibility. João, for example, is someone we always call when we're in the North. He's done many events with us and knows the ropes.

INTERVIEWER – That brings me to something I've been researching—volunteer retention. There's little literature on it, but it's such an important topic. All sports events rely on volunteers. If we don't retain them, we lose valuable knowledge and have to start from scratch each time.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. It's not just about recruiting new people—it's about keeping the ones who love being here. Sometimes we have to tell returning volunteers that there's no space this year, but we always try to bring them back in future editions. It's a community of people who genuinely enjoy being part of this.

INTERVIEWER – I also spoke with someone who raised the question of incentives. Should volunteers be paid?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – That's a tricky one. Personally, I believe paying volunteers undermines the spirit of volunteering. By definition, it's unpaid work. Once you introduce money, you attract people who are there for the compensation, not the passion. They might not care about the games or the teams—they're just doing a job. And that changes the energy.

INTERVIEWER – I agree. I've seen how passionate volunteers are. They're engaged, they care, they learn. If you pay them, you lose that spark.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. The passion is what makes it special. That's why we focus on creating a meaningful experience. In your questionnaire, you mentioned asking volunteers how to improve their experience. What did they say?

INTERVIEWER – Most responses were overwhelmingly positive—"It's five stars," "I loved it." Some mentioned small things, like transportation logistics or getting a shirt earlier. But overall, people were happy. That's why I'm curious about what mechanisms the organization uses to encourage volunteers to return.

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HELENA OLIVEIRA - It's mostly about creating a positive environment and recognizing their contributions. We stay in touch with past volunteers, invite them back, and make sure they feel part of the team. It's not about perks—it's about belonging. That's what keeps them coming back.

INTERVIEWER – Helena, as a volunteer, I've always felt that the greatest form of appreciation is respect. Recognizing volunteers publicly makes a huge difference. Can you share how the Federation approaches this?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Absolutely. Recognition is essential. Three years ago, we started a small tradition that's become very meaningful. During the finals, between the third and fourth quarters, we invite all volunteers to midfield and publicly acknowledge them in front of the crowd and the teams. The first year was a surprise, the second was semi-announced and this year we made it official.

INTERVIEWER – That moment is unforgettable. I remember teams shouting the guides' names—Mariana, even mine. It's emotional.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It really is. I had no idea how impactful it would be. It wasn't planned initially—we just thought, "What if we called the volunteers out?" And the reaction was incredible. The teams cheered, the audience applauded and we felt genuine love. I remember standing behind the teams, watching it unfold and I was truly moved.

INTERVIEWER – That kind of recognition goes a long way.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – It does. We'd love to offer more—cooler gift kits, for example—but we have limitations. We provide snacks, tokens and meals when needed. But more than anything, we show appreciation through affection and public recognition. That's our retention strategy. Volunteers return because they feel valued. And some do feel exploited and choose not to return, which is understandable.

INTERVIEWER – Of course. Everyone has the right to make that choice. But we've seen many return year after year. Some started as Moppers and now take on bigger roles. There's one volunteer we jokingly called the "premium volunteer"—he was always at Portugal games, knew everyone and had access to everything.

HELENA OLIVEIRA –This year, a group of kids who volunteered at the Portuguese Cup final in Gondomar signed up again. That's the kind of natural progression we love to see. Life changes, and not everyone can return. But when they do, it's meaningful.

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INTERVIEWER – Exactly.

HELENA OLIVEIRA - People grow, take on new commitments, but when they come back, it's a sign that what we're doing matters. We don't overpromise. If we can give something, we do. But we're honest about our limitations. Volunteers know what they're signing up for, and we try to make the experience enriching—personally, professionally, and socially.

INTERVIEWER – I tried to use my thesis to justify a 10-day leave for this championship, but couldn't get approval. Still, I promised I'd be here. I remember one year coming early to help set up chairs before the European Championships even started.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – That kind of dedication is what keeps these events running. Volunteers like you are the heart of it all.

INTERVIEWER – Helena, I wanted to ask you a three-part question about volunteers. First, what demographic trends are you noticing—are more or fewer volunteers joining? Second, what kind of feedback do you get from teams about the Team Attachés? And finally, how do you see this trend evolving in the coming years, especially with the growth of sport and sporting events?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Great questions. Regarding demographics, this year we've noticed fewer girls signing up, which we see as a less positive development. Recruitment for Attachés was handled by Manuel Albano, and while I wasn't directly involved, I don't think there were major difficulties. It's mostly based on his network and knowledge of the community.

INTERVIEWER – And what about feedback from the teams?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – The feedback is overwhelmingly positive. I always ask teams how things are going—"Are they behaving well?"—and they're usually very happy with the support. Of course, we've had a few isolated incidents, mostly harmless and quickly resolved. These volunteers are young, punctual and engaged. My hope is that those who leave will inspire the next generation.

INTERVIEWER – Do you see more repetition among certain roles?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes, especially among guides and Field Chiefs. There's a lot of continuity there. In other areas, it's less visible to me, but I believe it's similar. I've saved some guides' contacts for two or three years, usually labeled by country—like "Czechia"

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or "Belgium"—because I often forget names. I was joking with the new Belgian guide recently, saying, "I only talk when there's a problem so I haven't talked to you," and that's how it goes.

INTERVIEWER – Do you think volunteering is in crisis?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Globally and nationally, yes. Society is becoming more self-centered. People want compensation and that's understandable. But if we can maintain our volunteer numbers, we're going against the grain. Twenty volunteers today aren't the same as twenty volunteers twenty years ago. The value of their time and commitment is different.

INTERVIEWER – So the goal is to make the experience attractive?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. We want young people—U14s, U16s—to watch games, observe training and learn. For example, this year we have two volunteers driving FIBA officials: Fernando, who's been doing it for years, and João Leite, a new recruit. João is also a referee, and he's attending daily meetings with FIBA instructors. That's a huge opportunity for him to grow. Last year, Tiago had a similar experience. These are enriching moments—free education, really.

INTERVIEWER – And it's not just referees. Guides and volunteers watching games and training can learn a lot too.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Absolutely. Information is power. If you're aware, you absorb both the good and the bad. One of the best things is arriving and seeing people proud to contribute. This year, we have enough volunteers. Some even say, "I have nothing to do," and we tell them, "Enjoy the game." They're right at court level—NBA-level seats! It's a privilege.

INTERVIEWER – That personal connection is powerful. I still talk to girls from Croatia. Yesterday, I came to watch Belgium play, and when they saw us, they ran over, hugged us and chatted. Even the coach remembered our names. That's what fills the heart. One of the Belgian girls messaged us asking if we'd come watch her game. Her parents weren't there and my sister and I had been her guide. That kind of connection matters more than any souvenir. I don't care about having a shirt in a drawer—I care that they remember me. One of the things I love most about volunteering in sports is the affection and the relationships that form. Even today, I posted a story about Belgium, and one of the players replied, asking how things were going. I keep in touch with many of them.

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One went to Lisbon and messaged me to ask if I was there. These connections are so meaningful.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – That's one of the most beautiful parts of sport—the relationships and the emotion. It's not just about the games. It's about the feeling of being involved.

INTERVIEWER - I remember a match that wasn't going well, and Magda made a comment that stuck with me. The crowd was shouting, the energy was intense and even though we weren't playing, we were nervous. That emotion, that connection with the audience, is what makes sport so powerful. And that's what I'm exploring in my thesis—the human capital side of volunteering. It's not about financial benefit; it's about personal growth. I see three key areas: learning, building relationships and emotional fulfillment.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – That's a great framework. Volunteers gain knowledge, make connections, and experience powerful emotions. I remember a moment when a referee picked up a mop—something they rarely do. It was spontaneous, and the volunteer thanked her afterward. She said, "No problem," because she understood the spirit of the moment. But in a full pavilion, referees avoid that kind of gesture to maintain their authority. Still, it was a beautiful moment.

INTERVIEWER – And volunteers often provide valuable insights. I've seen guides point out things that were missing or needed attention. We all make mistakes and having fresh eyes helps.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Absolutely. This year, we were better prepared for Israel thanks to Baldaque, an excellent guide. Last year, everything was new and Helena stepped in. She's a remarkable example. She started as a field volunteer, coached mini-basketball, became a guide and this year she was the team attaché for the Senior National Team at the Women's EuroBasket. She even resigned from her job to take part. And she did all the training and preparation. It's a source of pride. I remember when I was team leader for the U16 National Team in 2003. I didn't speak much, but when the coach asked me to, I felt that same pride—"I'm part of the National Team." These experiences enrich us deeply.

INTERVIEWER – And they inspire others. Helena was my coach from age 12 to 20. Her whole family is involved—Néné, Bia and Nóno. It was Nini who first encouraged me to volunteer. Then Juliana, who's Eslovenia's guide, told me they needed help. That's when I learned about the refereeing course.

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HELENA OLIVEIRA – That's how it spreads—through word of mouth and shared experience. If it's meaningful to you, you'll pass it on. And that's what keeps the spirit of volunteering alive.

INTERVIEWER – I even considered coming this year, but my contract ends only in September. Still, the desire to be here is strong.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – That passion is what makes it all worthwhile.

INTERVIEWER – Helena, I wanted to revisit the topic of guide recruitment. I went through the process myself and I remember that during the first post-COVID Challenger, things were a bit different. The guides had to be from specific areas due to restrictions.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Yes, that's true. During that period, we had to be very selective. Guides were mostly local, which is usually the case anyway. They know the area—the pavilions, the routes, the shortcuts. When a team asks how to get to the transport point, it helps if the guide is from the region.

INTERVIEWER – I had Croatia two years in a row. The first year, I couldn't take them to the city center. The second year, I did. Knowing Porto, even the transport system, makes a difference. It becomes a network. You even get to know the bus drivers. I work across the street from one of the hotels, and just this week, I passed by a Swedish team's bus. The driver recognized me in my uniform and waved. It's funny how even the drivers become part of the team. It's a beautiful contrast to the individualism we often see in society. That's what I love about sport. It pushes the human body to its limits, but it also builds community. Everyone here contributes because they want to be here. The "payment" is being part of something meaningful.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Exactly. Not everyone sees it that way, but for many, the reward is in the relationships and the experience. That's what keeps them coming back.

INTERVIEWER – On a practical note, I have a volunteer form, but only 19 responses so far. I don't have contact with this year's guides. Would you be able to help share it?

HELENA OLIVEIRA – Of course. Send me the link, and I'll share it with all the volunteers—guides, camp leaders, everyone.

INTERVIEWER – Thank you! I posted it on my Instagram story, and I've had field volunteers ask me for pins and other keepsakes. Some even follow me or have my number because they want to stay connected. I'd love to gather more responses before

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I dive into writing my thesis this fall.

HELENA OLIVEIRA – I'll help however I can.

INTERVIEWER – And if you ever need a volunteer for anything, let me know. Or if you need a coach—I'm available

HELENA OLIVEIRA – (laughs) Deal.

INTERVIEWER – Thank you so much for your time and for all the incredible work you do. You were the first person I thought of when I started this project.

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